



Response to Request for Public Comment
To Inform Development of the National Export Initiative Plan

July 26, 2010

To: The Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee

From: Greg Sandler, Chairman, National District Export Council, Inc.

Re: Comments for the National Export Initiative

Greg Sandler is chairman of the National District Export Council, Inc. and president of ThinkGlobal Inc., a print and online publishing company that publishes Commercial News USA, the Commerce Department's Official Export Promotion Magazine. ThinkGlobal is also a corporate marketing partner of the U.S. Commercial Service. During the past year, Greg has led efforts by the 16 members of the National District Export Council Steering Committee to restructure the National District Export Council, including incorporation of a new non-profit corporation, development of a new website, and creation of an organizational framework in support of DEC's nationwide. The National District Council, Inc., is a non-profit corporation run by elected representatives from District Export Councils nationwide.

The National District Export Council: Representing a Nationwide Network of Export Promotion Advocates

District Export Councils (DECs) represent an important nationwide network for promoting and implementing the National Export Initiative.

There are currently 60 DECs nationwide, comprised of more than 1,500 members. DEC members are international trade professionals appointed by the Secretary of Commerce. These volunteers use their knowledge and international business experience to advocate in support of trade-related issues and to help small- and medium-sized businesses who want to export their products into markets outside of the United States.

DECs trace their history back 50 years. In 1960, President Eisenhower asked the Secretary of Commerce to enlist the efforts of the U.S. business community to help increase export opportunities for American firms. In response, the secretary created the National Export Expansion Council.

A decade later, based on recommendations from the National Export Expansion Council, President Nixon signed an Executive Order, in 1973, which directed the Secretary of Commerce to establish District Export Councils throughout the United States. Under the authority of the U.S. Department of Commerce, the Secretary of Commerce established 41 DECs in 1974.

Today, there are 60 DECs that contribute leadership and international trade expertise to complement the U.S. Commercial Service's export promotion efforts. District Export Councils are independent organizations that receive no government funding or compensation, and do not represent the government. Moreover, DECs are not official government advisory committees, and are not subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

Nationally, the DECs are represented by the National DEC Steering Committee, which is comprised of 16 members, with two members representing each of the eight domestic networks within the U.S. Commercial Service. Members serve staggered two-year terms, with half up for election (one per network) each year. DEC members may serve on the National Steering Committee for up to three terms, or six years.

In 2010, the National Steering Committee incorporated to form the National District Council, Inc. an independent non-profit corporation—similar to the status of many local DEC's around the country. The National DEC also has applied for 501(c)6 status.

By incorporating, the national DEC Steering Committee is establishing a more formal organizational framework for working with and assisting both the DEC's across the country, the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, and other federal agencies and organizations involved in export promotion.

The National Steering Committee includes six standing subcommittees: Education and Outreach, Electronic Communications, Export University, Green Industry & Technology, Legislative, and Trade Policy. Some of the activity the National DEC has undertaken in support of the NEI includes:

- ✓ Articles and Media Interviews by DEC members.
- ✓ Meeting with Congressional representatives.
- ✓ Meeting with policymakers on the state level.
- ✓ Meeting with government agencies involved in trade promotion and trade policy.
- ✓ Meeting with other national organizations supporting free trade, such as the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.
- ✓ Website expansion and development.
- ✓ Monthly E-mail and E-Newsletter communications.
- ✓ Advocating for Export Controls Modernization.
- ✓ Supporting passage of pending Free Trade Agreements with Colombia, Panama and South Korea.
- ✓ Developing webinars for DEC members on national issues, and to facilitate education and information sharing.
- ✓ Support for development of a White Paper underscoring the value of the Commercial Service Domestic Field Operations.

Initiatives now underway:

- Development of an Export University Online program.
- Creation of Site Selection Criteria for the annual National DEC Conference.
- Recommendations for National Conference program guidelines and financing strategies.
- Creation of the DEC 100 Campaign, intended to help more U.S. companies export.
- Development of a National marketing plan for the DEC.
- Creation of templates for an NEI toolkit.
- Development of an NEI outreach program.
- Creation of a legislative scorecard on Free Trade and Trade-Related Issues.
- Creation of a position paper in favor of passage of Free Trade Agreements.
- Development of an Export Controls Modernization Webinar.
- Development of proposals in support of Export Controls Modernization.

The National District Export Council, together with the individual DEC's across the country, represent a strong network of leaders in the international trade community. DEC's have historically been active in export promotion. Today, DEC's can help transform the National Export Initiative from a policy objective into a reality.

More information about the National District Export Council, including a complete list of the current members, is available online at www.districtexportcouncil.com